

Human Capital & Workforce Development with rootEd Arkansas



Overview

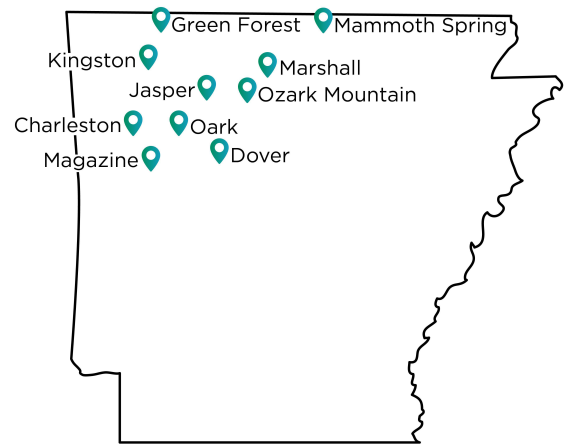
Heartland Forward, in collaboration with rootEd Alliance and with support from the Arkansas Department of Education, is driving efforts to strengthen Arkansas's talent pipeline and grow its economy by providing rural high school students with dedicated college and career advisors. The initiative ensures students graduate prepared for successful careers and economic stability which furthers Heartland Forward's mission to support Human Capital and Workforce Development in the heartland.

rootEd in Arkansas

The rootEd model places trained college and career advisors in rural schools across Arkansas. rootEd advisors work alongside school counselors to help students define and plan their futures, whether students choose to:

- Pursue higher education
- Explore apprenticeships in the trades
- Join the military

The rootEd model takes a community-centered approach, recruiting advisors from the local communities to ensure guidance is both culturally relevant and personalized to meet the unique needs of students in the region.



The program will be piloted across 10 participating high schools in the northwest region of AR in the 2024-25 school year.

Key Benefits and Success Stories

Strengthening the Talent Pipeline

By preparing students for a variety of postsecondary paths, the program builds strong talent pipelines to support local economies.

Diverse Pathways to Success

The program recognizes the multiple avenues to economic stability—be it college, trades, military or other options—contributing to holistic workforce development in Arkansas's rural communities.

Economic and Social Impact

The public-private partnership between educators, workforce leaders, local businesses and state agencies prepares students for the future while also supporting sustained economic growth in Arkansas.

- **82% of rootEd students are on track for successful careers** compared to 41% of all working 21 to 24 year-olds.
- The initiative has **increased FAFSA completion by 27% and college enrollment by 10%** in participating areas, even as national rural enrollment rates declined by 6% during the same period.

Heartland Forward is a policy think-and-do tank dedicated to being a resource for states and local communities in the middle of the country. We do this by studying broad economic trends and building data-driven and community-tested partnerships, programs and policies to address the needs of the heartland – all while helping to change the narrative about the middle of the country and kick-starting economic growth.

rootEd Alliance places dedicated college and career advisors in rural high schools to work with all students to define and plan their futures, whether through a college degree, work-based learning, or military service. Launched in 2018 and now operating in Missouri, Texas, and Idaho, 183 rootEd advisors have served 30,000 students at 189 high schools.